



Montgomery County Council

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Three-cent increase in gas tax would send half a billion dollars to fight congestion...

COUNCIL PREZ SILVERMAN URGES STATE TO CONSIDER MORE DEDICATED FUNDING FOR TRANSPORTATION

Also, state ed funding must be fair for needs of County kids

County Council President Steve Silverman today told state and local leaders at the annual legislative breakfast of the Committee for Montgomery that the state needs more dollars to fund road construction and transit projects – even if that means a boost in the state’s gas tax.

“Traffic congestion is destroying our quality of life and threatening our economy, which last year produced 40 percent of all the new jobs in Maryland,” said Silverman, who was elected yesterday to lead the Council for the coming year.

“It’s the reason a mother leaves work 40 minutes early to get to her son’s day care before it closes.

“It’s the reason why a plumber charges \$75 extra for a job in Montgomery County during rush hour.

“It’s the reason why a Silver Spring law firm won’t hire paralegals who live in Germantown – because they won’t stay once they experience the daily commute.

“The public expects action and we must all deliver.”

While acknowledging state support for state transit initiatives, Silverman said it was not nearly enough – and called for new funding.

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"Let's not kid ourselves or the public – we need additional revenues for traffic congestion relief," he said.

"While we continue to work on the big projects, we have to move ahead on road and transit projects that are ready now and can make a difference now. To do that, we need more resources.

"Gas prices are lower than they have been in two years. The gas tax was last raised nine years ago. A three-cent increase would raise almost half a billion over five years for congestion relief.

"The conventional wisdom says 'no way' to an increase. I say it's time to lay the groundwork for additional dedicated transportation funding – dollars that will go straight to new roads and transit to relieve congestion."

Silverman also addressed state education funding changes to be recommended by the Thornton Commission, saying that any changes must take into account the needs of the growing number of poor children in County schools.

"The number of poor children in our schools exceeds the total enrollment of 16 Maryland school systems," observed Silverman. "In 1970, eight percent of our kids were eligible for free and reduced meals. Now, it's nearly a quarter.

"We cannot accept a proposal that does not recognize our enormous needs, that underfunds key areas such as students with limited English proficiency, or that offers too little to help children with special needs."

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The full text of Council President Silverman's speech is available upon request by calling Patrick Lacefield at 240-777-7939